

WINTER TROUT FISHING AND OTHER SNOWY ACTIVITIES AT BACKBONE STATE PARK

In Iowa, the weather is usually unpredictable but it's almost guaranteed we'll get tons of snow in the winter. Some people take this frigid weather as an excuse to curl up on the couch for weeks at a time, which can be appealing. However, it's important to remember that there are lots of activities you can enjoy outside even during this cold time of year. The state parks in Iowa transform during the winter months to provide you a place to enjoy Iowa's snowy and icy season.

During my winter break from college, I ventured to Backbone State Park, between Dundee, IA and Strawberry Point, IA, to see what they offered for winter recreation. Their 125 campground sites were of course closed for the season, but the park could still accommodate campers in their modern one and two bedroom cabins, equipped with heating, air conditioning and running water. Upon my arrival I heard several fishermen enjoying themselves on the ice and hurried to unpack my items into my cabin so I explore the park grounds.



My neighbors in the cabin next to mine had some children enjoying the thick layer of snow, they had built a couple snowmen and even a snow fort!



While exploring the park, I found the entrance to the trail which leads to one of the highest points in Northeast Iowa, which is called the "Devil's Backbone". The park got its name from this

point, which is a narrow and steep ridge of bedrock carved by the looping Maquoketa River. During the summer season, climbers can even rappel on these challenging cliffs. There was too much snow to hike to this point, but the 21 miles of trails created the perfect place for winter outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing and snowmobiling.

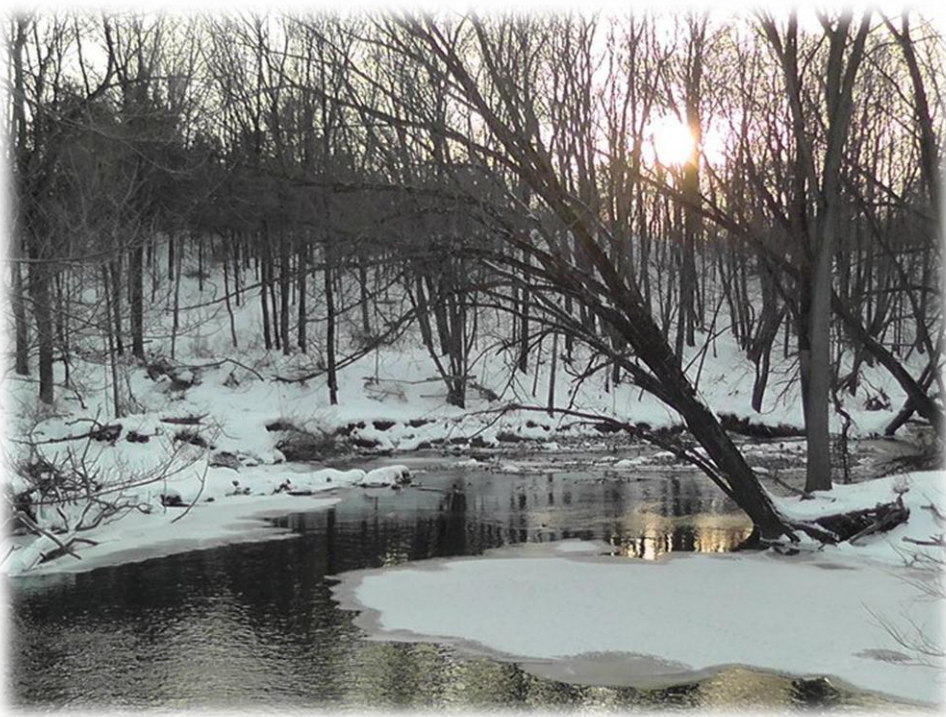
The overlook tower provided a great view of the beach and the lake.



Right before dusk was a great time to view wildlife, especially deer who were feeding near the road and even a bald eagle soaring above the lake!



Backbone Lake is a great place to ice fish, but there's also another fishing option in this park. Backbone is known for its wonderful trout fishing, even during the winter months. The quick-flowing stream located at the north end of the park pumps out over 2,000 gallons per minute so it doesn't freeze and is still accessible to fish in. The best time to trout fish in the winter is from 10AM to 2PM, the warmest part of the day and nymphs, wet flies and spinner-baits will work great to catch them. Just be sure you have you have a Trout Stamp before heading to the stream!



Another neat attraction at Backbone State Park is the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) museum. The CCC was an effort by President Roosevelt to provide work for unemployed American's during the great depression and the museum features the work the CCC accomplished in building state park facilities.